

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION



National Archives and Records Service

Washington, D.C. 20408

June 7, 1966

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Coq d'Or Farm
Hyattstown, Maryland 20734

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

This is in reply to your letters of May 26 and 27, 1966, addressed to Mr. Marion Johnson of our staff.

The unpublished basic documents of the Warren Commission in the National Archives were reviewed by the interested agencies of the Government with a view to making as many of them as possible available for research. A substantial part of the unpublished documents was cleared for research, but some of them were withheld for one or more of the reasons stated in the enclosed list of guidelines that were used by the agencies in making their review.

The manuscript transcripts of testimony of witnesses among the records of the Commission are withheld from research because they contain matter deleted in the published Hearings for the reason that the Commission considered publication to be in poor taste or the information to be irrelevant to any facet of the Commission's investigation (Hearings, Vol. I, p. v.).

We shall write you further about other matters covered in your letters as soon as we can complete a search for information about them.

As far as we know, there has been no designation of an agency to continue the work of the Warren Commission relating to the assassination of President Kennedy. The National Archives merely has custody of the records of the Commission and can make available only those records that have been cleared for research use. I should like to emphasize that it is our policy, and has consistently been our policy to provide access to researchers on a basis of complete equality.

Sincerely yours,

Robert H. Bahmer
Archivist of the United States

Enclosure

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Justice Dept. Review of Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEW OF MATERIALS SUBMITTED TO
THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION ON THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

1. Statutory requirements prohibiting disclosure should be observed.
2. Security classifications should be respected, but the agency responsible for the classification should carefully re-evaluate the contents of each classified document and determine whether the classification can, consistently with the national security, be eliminated or downgraded.
3. Unclassified material which has not already been disclosed in another form should be made available to the public on a regular basis unless disclosure--
 - (A) Would be detrimental to the administration and enforcement of the laws and regulations of the United States and its agencies;
 - (B) Might reveal the identity of confidential sources of information and impede or jeopardize future investigations by precluding or limiting the use of the same or similar sources hereafter;
 - (C) Would be a source of embarrassment to innocent persons, who are the subject, source, or apparent source of the material in question, because it contains gossip and rumor or details of a personal nature having no significant connection with the assassination of the President;

(D) Would reveal material pertinent to the criminal prosecution of Jack Ruby for the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, prior to the final judicial determination of that case.

Whenever one of the above reasons for nondisclosure may apply, your department should, in determining whether or not to authorize disclosure, weigh that reason against the overriding policy of the Executive Branch favoring the fullest possible disclosure.

Unless sooner released to the public, classified and unclassified material which is not now made available to the public shall, as a minimum, be reviewed by the agency concerned five years and ten years after the initial examination has been completed. The criteria applied in the initial examination, outlined above, should be applied to determine whether changed circumstances will permit further disclosure. Similar reviews should be undertaken at ten-year intervals until all materials are opened for legitimate research purposes. The Archivist of the United States will arrange for such review at the appropriate time. Whenever possible provision should be made for the automatic declassification of classified material which cannot be declassified at this time.